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LETTER DATED 15 JULY 1992 FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement made by the Reverend Frank Chikane, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, at the International Hearing on Political Violence in South Africa and the Implementation of the National Peace Accord, co-sponsored by the Special Committee against Apartheid, held in London on 14 and 15 July 1992.

I would appreciate it if the present letter and the attached statement could be circulated as document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ibrahim GAMBARI
Chairman
Special Committee against Apartheid

Annex

Opening address to the International Hearing on Violence in South Africa and the Implementation of the National Peace Accord

I would like to express our thanks to the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, particularly Archbishop Trevor Huddleston for organizing this event on political violence in South Africa with an intention of assisting to resolve this crisis. I would like to also thank the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid for sponsoring and supporting this important hearing.

South Africa is part and parcel of the world. It is part of what is often called a global village and, as such, whatever happens there affects the international community equally. As long as one part of this globe has no peace, there will be no peace in the world. Your interest therefore in our plight in South Africa is welcome and appreciated. This event has the potential of giving our people in South Africa hope that a solution will be produced soon to end the violence. There is a lot of feeling of hopelessness, of people who are victims of circumstances because of this senseless violence.

Our country has not known peace since 1652 and more so since the imposition of the apartheid system in 1948. But the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed the worst violence ever. This violence is related, first, to the security force suppression of the people's resistance to the apartheid system. And lately, it is part of the strategy of the Government of destabilization and weakening of opposing parties in the negotiation process.

Following the 2 February 1990 announcement of the de Klerk Government to unban the liberation movements and to enter into negotiations, we warned that the violence that was escalating then formed a serious threat and obstacle to the negotiation process. Once negotiations had started in one form or another, we warned again that this violence threatened the process itself.

Between 2 February 1990 and 1 October 1991, church leaders of the South African Council of Churches met Mr. de Klerk three times. And in these meetings preliminary evidence of allegations of security force involvement in the violence was presented to him. We made him aware of the general loss of confidence in the security forces by the majority of South Africans.

As a result of this violence, the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) gave the Government an ultimatum in May 1991 to act on certain aspects of this violence before 9 May 1991, failing which there would be no talks between the Government and ANC. This crisis called for church leaders to intervene to get the negotiation process back on track. Following this intervention, broad forum of churches and businesses was constituted to facilitate the process that led to the National Peace Accord.

The National Peace Accord and various other factors opened the way for a possibility of a negotiated settlement in South Africa. But the violence continued to threaten this process. As a result, church leaders of the South African Council of Churches convened an emergency summit of leaders of affected areas to work out a joint strategy on how to end the violence. A statement in this regard was adopted leading to two follow-up working groups on matters that dealt with international monitoring and involvement of the international community and general implementation strategies on decisions of leaders. I will not bore you with the details. The three documents could be made available for your study.

In the same breath, church leaders also requested a meeting with Mr. de Klerk to impress on him once more the seriousness and dangers of the violence and presented to him concrete proposals on how this violence could be ended. A detailed memorandum was presented to him and it has been put as part of the package for the present hearing. Unfortunately, since 22 May 1992, when we met Mr. de Klerk, there has been no response to that memorandum.

This International Hearing meets at a time when we are faced with the worst crisis ever in the country. There is a deadlock at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) regarding constitutional negotiations and related matters of the process of negotiations. Many would ask what the nature of the deadlock is. And I would summarize it by saying that the minority Government understandably fears democracy. That if democracy took its course it would lose power. And its intention of entering into a negotiation process was not to lose power but to be part of that control of power. And that is understandable when it comes to people who are in the minority. But, unfortunately, democracy requires that the people of the country make the choices that they would want to have. The key question that is facing South Africa today is whether the people of South Africa participate in the production of a constitution for that country, or some group that is not elected produces a constitution and imposes it on the people. And that to me is the element of the deadlock.

But we are not only faced with a deadlock, we are also faced with a call for mass action to force the apartheid regime out of power, or to cause it to remove all constraints to the process of transition to democracy. This has been undertaken because of the deadlock. People who are voteless and cannot follow ordinary processes of elections and deciding on the future of the country resort to methods that they believe are the best at a particular given time. And this has been the method that has been resorted to.

On the other hand, there is also a third element in this crisis: a build-up since 16 June 1992 of a violent response of forces of darkness to mass action. In fact, the prophets of doom want to prove and fulfil their prophesy - mass action will cause violence. And so when people undertake it, then forces of darkness come and murder people so that the world can believe that, indeed, it causes violence. A close examination of the violence around 16 June and the days after shows that in fact the violence came from outside

people who made or were involved in the action, rather than people who were themselves involved.

That action by forces of darkness has resulted in the Boipatong massacre and various other incidents of brutal killings of innocent civilians in the country.

The fourth element is that all this had led to the breakdown in the negotiation process. CODESA has been put aside and there have been exchanges of memoranda and a moratorium has been declared on exchanges of memoranda as well. And so we are faced with the worst crisis ever.

To put this violence in perspective, I have chosen to deal, rather, with the historical sources of this violence in South Africa and focusing specifically on the role of the apartheid regime in this violence. I'm doing this so that all those who will present evidence in the hearings of specific activity and involvement of one group or another in the violence will have the context within which they present it. I have chosen rather to deal with the Government and some would ask why have I chosen to do so. There are two reasons. One is that the rest of the other complexities of the violence will be dealt with during these hearings and I wish you all the luck in that exercise. But the second and the main reason is that whilst church leaders are aware of the complex nature of this violence and the fact that there are other parties implicated in this regard, we believe that the South African Government is primarily responsible for the violence. Our conclusion is based on the following.

First, it is the historical involvement of the South African Government in violence itself. All of us know that the regime was structured in such a way that it institutionally violated the rights of the majority of South Africans. The racist apartheid Government and the system was violently imposed on the people, causing untold harm, misery and death to many of our people over many years.

To suppress the people's resistance, they used naked force, including detention without trial, torture and long-term imprisonment of opponents of apartheid. This naked violence of the regime started a spiral of violence in the form of counter-violence and more violence.

It is now history that the Government considered the people's resistance as part of a total onslaught against the White minority and thus developed an elaborate strategy called "total strategy" against what was perceived as a "total onslaught" against it. This total strategy meant total war against all those opposed to the regime, both inside the country and outside the country. This involved mass detentions, repressive security legislation, restrictions on the press, etc. It involved getting engaged in covert operations involving assassinations, special forces, murder squads and hit squads. And more revelations of commissions, evidence in commissions have shown that this was the way in which the Government operated. The only way the revelations take

me shows beyond doubt that in fact the Government was involved at the highest level.

But this violence of apartheid has created a spirit of intolerance amongst the people of South Africa. Apartheid was intolerant and therefore people learned to be intolerant. People learned to be violent as a way of resolving their problems. Because of this intolerance and the resort to violence as a means of solving problems we have created a culture of violence in the country. A culture of intolerance that South Africa will suffer under for a long, long time. The violence, therefore, as designed, was such that it would then appear in terms of covert designs and operations to be a "Black on Black" violence, or to look like it is a "Black on Black" violence.

The revelations have made it unnecessary for me to sing the song I have been singing up to July last year, of saying this is not just a tribal violence. This is not just "Black on Black" violence. This is a well-designed form of violence that has political intentions. The violence in the country has taken a momentum of its own and ultimately is becoming self-perpetuating.

Whilst those who triggered it may look innocent, they are responsible for that spiral of violence we are facing. The second reason that we believe that the Government must take responsibility is the Government's failure to cap the violence. That Government was very efficient in dealing with us. I'm one of those people who knew how effective they were. There was no time when we held a meeting and did not expect that they would know about it. There was no time when we planned peaceful activity, when we did not expect that they would know about it and interfere with it. They have been effective in pre-empting even peaceful protest, which we tried to plan in a way they would not know. They arrested many of our people and suddenly the same effective security force has lost its capacity to deal with the type of violence we are facing in the country.

We argue that they have no intention to stop the violence and that the violence is a continuation of the covert operations which are part of the security forces and therefore have no ability, no capacity to end that violence.

The third reason is that this Government has a responsibility as Government. We believe that it is not a legitimate Government. But it is a legal authority. It has responsibility for the security forces. No one outside the Government can stop the violence except a legal authority with security forces. And unless there is an alternative peace-keeping force or an alternative form of security force, all specialized and trained for that purpose, we are unlikely to end the violence.

The Government cannot argue for sovereignty of State and that it is the legal authority and pass the responsibility for ending violence to othepeople.

I would like to summarize by saying that we believe that there are other groups that are involved in violence. And the evidence will indicate in that direction. But we believe that the Government is primarily responsible and that unless the Government takes responsibility to end the violence no one outside that Government can stop it. And unless we gain access to their covert operations no one will be able to stop the violence in the country.

And so the ball is right in the court of the apartheid regime and we have to make sure that all South Africans and the international community constrain the Government in South Africa, in the interim, to stop the violence until such time that interim mechanisms take responsibility for the security forces.

Secondly, I would like to submit to you, which submission I've made last week to our conference of the South African Council of Churches, that the Government has had a strategy that is twofold. The first part of the strategy was a strategy of destabilizing those it negotiated with, whilst negotiating with them, saying which they would resort to what others have called "Plan B". And this Plan B would mean that in the process of negotiations and giving credibility to the South African Government, entering into international relations would give the Government such an image that anybody who questioned their bona fides would lose the propaganda war. And having lost the propaganda war the suppression of those people would be justified. I would like to ask you to be vigilant as you deal with this violence during these two days.